

Mayor Kenneth A. Gibson of Newark N.J.



a biographical sketch

Kenneth Allen Gibson is the 36th Mayor of Newark, New Jersey's largest city. He was first elected to the position in 1970, and re-elected in 1974 and 1978. He is the first Mayor to serve more than two terms under Newark's present form of government.

Mayor Gibson has become a major national spokesman for urban America, and has made numerous appearances in Washington, Trenton and elsewhere to press for greater attention and assistance for the nation's cities. In 1976-77 he served a one-year term as president of the U. S. Conference of Mayors, and for several years he has represented America's big-city mayors at many public forums.

Gibson has appeared before the Joint Economic Committee of the U. S. Congress; the Labor and Education, Ways and Means, and Judiciary Committees of the House; the Labor and Welfare Committees of the U. S. Senate, and diverse national and state organizations.

Mayor Gibson has helped to refurbish the tarnished image of Newark, and inspired new self-esteem for its residents by restoring public confidence in the basic integrity of Newark's government. He has received national attention and acclaim for his achievements, such as the Fiorello H. LaGuardia Award of the New School for Social Research in New York City. He was selected by Time Magazine as one of America's outstanding 200 young men, and the international edition of Time as one of the world's top 50 young leaders. Gibson was acclaimed by The Times of London as an example of the type of international political leadership which will be developed in the future.

He has initiated innovative programs in housing, public works, health and welfare by mobilizing state and federal revenues to chart a new course for Newark, while increasing the efficiency and capabilities of municipal departments and agencies.

His philosophy and experiences led Gibson to adopt the motto: "Wherever America's cities are going, Newark will get there first."

In the 1960s, before he became Mayor of Newark, Gibson was increasingly involved in community services. He was the co-chairman of the Business and Industrial Coordinating Council, a group formed to increase employment opportunities for Blacks and Puerto Ricans. In 1964 he was named "Man of the Year" by the Newark Jaycees. He also served as vice president of the United Community Corporation, Newark's antipoverty agency.

Gibson first ran for Mayor in 1966, and four years later he triumphed over six other candidates, including the incumbent. Since then his efforts to rebuild the city, both physically and psychologically, have been rewarded with growing margins of victory. He received 54 per cent of the vote in 1974, and more than 68 per cent in 1978.

While Newark's elections are nonpartisan, the Mayor is an active Democrat and maintains a high degree of involvement at the county, state and national levels of the party.

Gibson was a saxophonist in his younger days, and his principal hobby in recent years has been jogging. He has competed in long distance runs in Newark, New York and other cities, and was the first mayor ever to finish the 26-mile Boston Marathon.

He was born in the small town of Enterprise, Alabama, on May 15, 1932. He moved with his parents and younger brother to Newark in 1940. He attended Newark public schools and was graduated from Central High School. He served in the Army and later earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering from N. J. Institute of Technology, then known as Newark College of Engineering. He also has honorary degrees from several colleges.

A licensed professional engineer, Gibson worked in the 1950s and 1960s for the N.J. State Department of Transportation, Newark Redevelopment and Housing Authority, and Newark Bureau of Buildings. Gibson and his wife, the former Muriel Cook, live in Newark's Central Ward. They have three adult daughters and three grandchildren.